

July 18, 2008

Dear Faithful of the Diocese of Scranton:

From June 30 to July 2, the Diocesan Planning Commission participated in a Planning retreat at Fatima Renewal Center in Dalton. These were days of prayer, study, and discussion that resulted in preliminary recommendations that were sent to the 50 Cluster teams of the diocese on July 16. Pertinent cluster recommendations will be published in the appropriate parish bulletins either on the weekend of July 19 - 20 or July 26 – 27 at the discretion of the pastor.

The Second Vatican Council described parishes as “cells” of a diocese and more recently Pope Benedict XVI described parishes as the “connective tissue” of the diocese. The planning commission looked at recommendations from the individual clusters from a diocesan perspective, in light of the Diocesan Mission statement, the eight goals and the twenty criteria of *“Called to Holiness and Mission: Pastoral Planning in the Diocese of Scranton.”* (These can be found in the Called to Holiness and Mission section on the diocesan website.) I hope that you will likewise look at these preliminary recommendations in the same light and perspective.

We are now at the beginning of steps four and five of an eight-step process. Step four is conversation about the preliminary recommendations from the planning commission at the Cluster level. Once again, prayer, study and discussion within the cluster core team and at the level of each parish are necessary. It is important that parishioners are aware of the goals, assumptions and criteria of *“Called to Holiness and Mission.”* After discussion within the cluster team and parish, step five will be a response to the Diocesan Planning Commission about a particular model with a rationale by the Cluster team.

In step six, the Diocesan Planning Commission will meet for another Planning Retreat in October for prayer, study and further discussion on the responses from the Cluster teams on the preliminary recommendations before making final recommendations to Bishop Martino.

Step seven will be a decision by Bishop Martino after appropriate consultation based on the Final Recommendations made at the October Planning Retreat by the Diocesan Planning Commission. Bishop Martino will announce his decisions in January 2009.

Step eight will be implementation at the parish, cluster and diocesan level of all decisions made by Bishop Martino, beginning July 1, 2009.

Bishop Martino continues to ask all members of the Diocese of Scranton to pray for profound parish renewal and for God's blessing on "*Called to Holiness and Mission: Pastoral Planning in the Diocese of Scranton.*" In his June 19, 2008 Pastoral Letter, he directs our attention to the Year of Saint Paul and Called to Holiness and Mission: "Perhaps even more to the point is that as we observe our first full year of Called to Holiness and Mission, we will do Saint Paul great honor if we recall God's graces in our lives, if we take advantage of the Church's teachings and Sacraments to convert to even greater holiness, and if we bring our precious Catholic faith to others, in direct imitation of this great Apostle and missionary.

"The title Called to Holiness and Mission is what I like to call a mini-gospel, a miniature statement of the Good News of salvation. Though in this first year of Called to Holiness and Mission we must prepare our parishes and institutions for the New Evangelization, we nevertheless will be reflecting upon the phrase Called to Holiness and Mission for many years to come."

I join Bishop Martino in asking for your prayers.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Monsignor Vincent J. Grimalia, V.G.

Director

*Called to Holiness and Mission: Pastoral Planning in the Diocese of Scranton*